



NEWS

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State Files Felony Theft Charges Against Moses Lake Florist

Moses Lake, Wash., March 7, 2006 — Felony theft charges were filed today against a Moses Lake florist who allegedly collected but kept nearly \$94,000 in sales taxes.

The charges were filed in Grant County Superior Court against Sally Marlene Walton, 62, co-owner of Moses Lake Floral, 115 West Third Avenue. The charges were brought by the Criminal Justice Division of the Attorney General's Office at the request of the Washington State Department of Revenue, and with the concurrence of the Grant County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

According to the charging papers, Walton and her husband, William W. Walton, 62, had not filed a state tax return since they purchased the business in 1998. A Department of Revenue audit concluded that the business had collected \$93,805 in state and local sales tax on its sales between January 2000 and June 2004 but remitted none of that to the Department as required by law. The business continued in operation following the audit and still did not remit returns. Sally Walton was identified as the bookkeeper, although her husband William also had substantial involvement.

The state executed a search warrant today against the business to seize records that were believed to be available despite a suspicious Nov. 23, 2005 fire that was largely confined to a computer and records area of the business. The Moses Lake Police Department reported that the circumstances of the fire were suspicious and that unburned gasoline was found near the burned area.

Felony theft of sales tax is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine, plus restitution.

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